Radio Japan's

Rika Kobayashi

by Jeff Chanowitz

With a sweet sounding feminine voice, a dark-haired Japanese woman welcomes listeners with, "Hello from Tokyo and welcome to another edition of 'DX Corner.'"

That voice belongs to Rika Kobayashi. As a producer and host, Kobayashi is typical of Radio Japan's hardworking staff members that bring the world the latest news and programming from Tokyo.

Working in the gleaming white, multi-story NHK headquarters, which is located in the Shibuya district of Central Tokyo, Kobayashi is one of the 200 full-time staff members who broadcast in 21 different languages over 44 and a half hours a day. Kobayashi and other staff members attempt to bring news which is accurate and unbiased, and programs that provide information on the traditions and culture of modern Japan.

Rika grew up in Mosashino town (a suburb of Tokyo) not expecting a career in broadcasting. As she puts it, "I never really planned to get into radio or international broadcasting for that matter." While studying Sociology at Rikkyo University in Central Tokyo, Kobayashi passed a test at NHK that enabled her to work as an English announcer.

Five years ago, Kobayashi began her career at Radio Japan reading news and commentary on the air. A year later, she joined Radio Japan's production department. The first program she produced was "Hello Australasia," a program that covered topics pertaining to Japanese relations between Australia, New Zealand, and other countries within the Australasian region.

Currently, Kobayashi hosts and produces one of the most popular programs at Radio Japan. "It's all about music. Not just in Japan, but all round the world." That is how Rika describes her new program *Music Mix*. Each week the program features 7 to 8 different selections of music on a different theme. The songs on *Music Mix* range from Japanese traditional music to African Pop.

A Program for DXers

Since last year, Kobayashi has also produced and hosted the highly respected and extremely popular *DX Corner*. "It's very interesting. I like to receive the letters from all over the world and know what people overseas are feeling," says Kobayashi of her work on *DX Corner*.

Yet, putting together the program is not all fun. Each day Kobayashi sorts through dozens and dozens of DX reports that are telephoned, faxed, or mailed to Radio Japan. Then she arranges the DX information into a cohesive form that is taped on Saturday for airing on Sunday and Monday.

One of Kobayashi's biggest problems is that many of the reception reports sent in only give information about Radio Japan. Kobayashi candidly remarked, "I thank the listeners for writing, but I would really rather they tell us about the reception of other stations."

Aside from reports, Rika receives many cards and letters. Listener comments range from program suggestions to unusual questions. One memorable listener wanted to know if there were any UFOs in Japan!

Photo by Jim Smith

In addition to letters from abroad, Kobayashi also receives comments from Japanese listeners. "DXers in Japan are a bit too serious," is Kobayashi's description of the difference between Japanese DXers and DXers abroad. She explained that DXers abroad provided more personal information and seemed a little bit more friendly.

By the end of each year, all this mail adds up to about 80,000 pieces of correspondence that have been received at Radio Japan's headquarters. About 60 percent of the letters come from India and Bangladesh. The rest arrive from the United States, Germany, Australia, Argentina and Brazil.

An Historical Perspective

In Japan, shortwave broadcasting has a long history. Starting in 1935, Japan's external service began broadcasting one-hour